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Agenda item 3
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Letter dated 2 March 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On 4 February 2005, the European Union Ministers responsible for gender equality policy and the European Commissioner with responsibility for this portfolio participated in a European Ministerial Conference in Luxembourg. The participants adopted a Declaration in the context of the Beijing+10 review of the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

In this declaration, the European Union reiterates its conviction that gender equality is essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals set out in the Millennium Declaration and that a gender perspective must be fully integrated in the review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration at the summit to be held in September 2005. It also reaffirms the European Union's strong support for and commitment to the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action and its conviction that the implementation of this Programme is also essential for achieving the Development Goals set out in the Millennium Declaration. On 23 November 2004, the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the European Union adopted its conclusions on the renewed commitment of the European Union to the International Conference on Population and Development in the context of the Development Goals set out in the Millennium Declaration.

As President of the Council of the European Union, I should be grateful if you would arrange for the Ministerial Declaration of the Conference of Ministers responsible for gender equality policy, of 4 February 2005 (see annex), and the conclusions of the Council of the European Union, of 23 November 2004 (see attachment), to be circulated as a document of the United Nations at the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

(*Signed*) Jean-Marc **Hoscheit**

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Annex to the letter dated 2 March 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

Ministerial declaration

Conference of Ministers of Gender Equality

Luxembourg, 4 February 2005

We, the Ministers of the 25 EU Member States responsible for gender equality policy participating in the European Ministerial Conference held in Luxembourg on 4 February 2005 in the context of the Beijing + 10 Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the 23rd session of the General Assembly 2000;

Acknowledging the conclusions of the report of the Luxembourg Presidency on the progress made by the enlarged EU following the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the Presidency conference on the Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action held on 2 and 3 February 2005, also in Luxembourg;

Reaffirm our strong support for and commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Beijing + 5 Political Declaration and Outcome Document of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, as well as the agreed conclusions adopted at the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women since Beijing,

Recall our commitment to achieve the full and effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol;

Reaffirm our strong support for and commitment to the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994, as well as the key actions for the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action agreed at ICPD+5 and the Copenhagen Declaration and Action Programme;

Emphasise that gender equality can not be achieved without guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, and reaffirm that expanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and health services are essential for achieving the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals;

Emphasise that gender equality is an important goal in itself and essential to the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals and that a gender perspective should be fully integrated at the high-level review of the Millennium Declaration, including the Millennium Development Goals;

Recognize that full enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls is an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights and is essential for the advancement of women and girls, peace and development;

Encourage the active involvement of men and boys in the achievement of gender equality;

Ensure that all measures are consistent with internationally recognized principles of non-discrimination - including multiple-discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, and that they take into account the respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the victims of such discriminations;

Also recognize that progress towards achieving equality between women and men has been made in the past decade but that inequalities persist and that multiple barriers remain in most of the strategic areas of the Beijing Platform for Action to gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women;

Stress that it is essential that the EU member countries act as partners to use the opportunity provided by the CSW 49th session for a full, unequivocal and universal reaffirmation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the 23rd session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and to review and appraise progress made since Beijing and Beijing+5, to identify obstacles and current challenges and agree on the following actions and initiatives to further implement and promote equality between women and men.

1. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

Underline that institutional structures and mechanisms at European and at national level are the main vehicles through which the Platform for Action can be achieved and that they must act as catalysts for gender mainstreaming and gender equality.

Agree to

Ensure that gender equality bodies and structures have the human and financial resources and capacities necessary to function effectively. Guarantee strong political commitment, at the highest level, as well as clear mandates and functions, in order to ensure the empowerment and advancement of women and the implementation of legislation, to develop specific actions as well as to apply gender mainstreaming;

Enhance dialogue and cooperation with civil society and social partners;

Guarantee gender equality under and before the law and create an enabling environment to translate rights into reality;

Take concrete steps to implement both gender mainstreaming and specific actions to achieve gender equality, including the design and implementation of multi-year national action plans for gender equality and the further development of gender expertise and gender training;

Identify processes and tools that will encourage greater accountability for addressing gender equality issues;

Develop methods and tools for gender mainstreaming such as gender budgeting, gender audit and gender impact assessment as a priority for the future;

Continue to improve the collection, compilation and dissemination of timely, reliable, comparable data disaggregated by sex;

Set time-bound targets and progressively update them inter alia through the involvement of national and international statistical organisations;

Monitor progress by regular reporting and assessing results in order to create a more consistent and systematic monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the Platform for Action.

2. GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPLOYMENT, ECONOMY AND POVERTY

Recognize that gender equality is fundamental to the achievement of full employment and economic growth, reinforcement of social protection and poverty eradication;

Strengthen the link between the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Goals and the Lisbon Strategy, adopted by the European Council in 2000, in order to reinforce economic reform and social cohesion as part of a stronger knowledge-based economy across the Union;

Recognize that women's employment rates, women's unemployment, the gender pay gap, sex segregation in the labour market, the unequal share of the burden of unpaid labour between women and men and the gender-specific imbalances in decision making, remain challenges for the EU.

Agree to

Strengthen efforts to combat social exclusion and to remove obstacles to women's participation in the labour market, including through measures to combat discrimination and exploitation in the workplace;

Develop along with measures to increase competitiveness and productivity, strategies to increase the number of women in employment and in quality jobs, to ensure and protect the rights of women workers and to remove structural and legal and attitudinal barriers to gender equality at work;

Focus on policies to enable women and men to balance their working and private life and family responsibilities; Reform tax and benefit systems, where appropriate, to provide financial incentives for women to take up, remain and return to work and encourage men to share responsibilities and tasks in the family;

Tackle the gender pay gap through a multifaceted approach addressing underlying factors including sectoral and occupational segregation, education and training, job classifications and pay systems; Promote and support women's self employment, development of small enterprises, and their access to credit including micro-credit and capital on terms equal to men;

Integrate gender analysis into the design, implementation and evaluation of measures, especially those relating to macro-economic policies and poverty reduction. Use quantifiable measurements, targets and benchmarks to allow for a proper monitoring and evaluation of progress;

Remove barriers and promote opportunities for women, including women migrants and other marginalized women, to access and participate in economic decision-making at all levels.

3. GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, PEACE BUILDING, VIOLENCE AND TRAFFICKING AND OTHER AREAS OF CONCERN

Reaffirm that the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms is essential for the empowerment of women and girls and the achievement of a real democracy;

Reaffirm our commitment to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, including through development cooperation and partnership and recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment are of fundamental importance for the achievement of sustainable development and eradication of poverty.

Agree to

Ensure the full enjoyment by all women and girls, including migrant women, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and develop specific strategies and benchmarks to measure progress;

Support, encourage and disseminate research, and collect sex and age-disaggregated statistics on factors and multiple barriers that affect the full enjoyment by women of their economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, including their right to development, and on violations that are particular to women and girls and disseminate the findings and utilize the collected data in assessing the implementation of the human rights of women;

Develop preventative methods to combat gender based violence and trafficking in human beings for sexual and other forms of exploitation and monitor their implementation;

Intensify actions to prevent and combat all forms of trafficking in women and girls through a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary and co-ordinated anti-trafficking strategy;

Strengthen measures to address all the factors, that encourage trafficking in women and girls, by strengthening existing legislation with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and to prosecute and punish the perpetrators, through both criminal and civil measures and take comprehensive measures to discourage the demand;

Mainstream a gender perspective into national immigration and asylum policies, regulations and practices, as appropriate in order to promote and protect the rights of all women and girls, including the consideration of steps to recognize gender-related persecution and violence when assessing grounds for granting refugee status and asylum;

Implement and encourage initiatives, policies and programmes and monitor their implementation, as appropriate, following the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) concerning women, peace and security and the Council of Europe Declaration, Programme of Action and Resolution on democratisation, conflict prevention and peace building, to promote the roles of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace building and post-conflict democratic processes, in particular through the full realisation of the human rights of women and the non-violent resolution of conflicts, the equal participation of women and men in decision-making, the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, the combating of gender based violence against civil populations, in particular women and girls;

Ensure that the needs of women in post-disaster relief and reconstruction situations are properly understood and are addressed in programmes, promote the role of men and women in post-disaster and reconstruction, including in decision making;

Ensure women's equal access to information on disaster reduction by means of formal and non-formal education, including through gender sensitive early warning systems and empower women to take related action in timely and appropriate manner;

Intensify our efforts to support developing countries to integrate gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women within policies and programmes, by appropriate technical and financial assistance;

Continue to develop, adopt and fully implement laws and other measures, as appropriate, such as policies and educational programmes, to eradicate harmful customary or traditional practices, including female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage and crimes committed in the name of honour, which are obstacles to the full enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights and fundamental freedoms;

Take concrete steps to create an educational and social environment to encourage women and men, girls and boys to achieve their full potential and to mainstream gender into all educational policies and programmes;

Achieve the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making and ensure equal political, economic and social participation of women in all spheres to provide the balance that is needed to strengthen democracy; increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through media and new technologies of communication;

Promote balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media;

Emphasise the urgent need to link the fight against HIV/AIDS with support for reproductive and sexual health and rights, in particular to ensure strong political commitment and funding for sexual and reproductive health information, services and research, ensure access, extend treatment and care, and ensure reproductive choices to people affected by HIV, in accordance with the ICPD Plan of Action.

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The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia and the EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, who participated in the ministerial conference as observers, align themselves with this declaration.

Enclosure

Council of the European Union conclusions on a renewed European Union commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development in the context of the Millennium Development Goals

23 November 2004

RECALLING AND REAFFIRMING

- The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development adopted by 179 states at Cairo in 1994, as well as the key actions for the further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action agreed at ICPD+5 by 159 UN Member States in 1999;

- The United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS), June 2001;

- The Platform of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing in 1995;

- The Council Conclusions of 20 May 2003 on Aid for Policies and Actions on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights in Developing Countries and Aid for Poverty Related Diseases;

- The Regulation (EC) No 1567/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Aid Policies and Actions on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights in Developing Countries of 15 July 2003[1];

- The Council Resolution of 30 May 2002 on Health and Poverty Reduction in Developing Countries;

- The Council Conclusions of 8 November 2001 on the Program of Action for the Mainstreaming of Gender Equality in Community Development Co-operation;

- The Council Conclusions of 26 January 2004 and of 27 April 2004 on the EU position with regard to the MDGs, as well as on the Mandate for the Commission to prepare an EU synthesis report on the MDG stocktaking exercise due in 2005;

- The commitments made by the EU at the European Council at Barcelona in March 2002 in view of the preparation of the Monterrey Conference (ICFD); where the Heads of State welcomed the renewed commitment to increase financial resources and encouraged Member States to raise the level of ODA to 0,7 % of the GNI;

- The Conclusions of the Council of 19 November 2002, in relation to the request to the Commission to report on the Monterrey Follow-up, as well as the Council Conclusions of 20 May 2003 and of 27 April 2004 on the first and on the second monitoring reports by the Commission on the follow-up to Monterrey;

REAFFIRMING the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Program of Action adopted in1994 by 179 states setting, amongst others, the goal of universal access to reproductive health services by 2015;

[1] O.J. L 224 p. 1 of 6.09.2003.

NOTING that 2004 marks the 10th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, Cairo 1994), and constitutes the halfway point of the 20-year agenda set out in Cairo ten years ago;

WELCOMING the UNFPA review of ICPD + 10 in the report "State of the World Population 2004. The Cairo Consensus at Ten: Population, Reproductive Health and the Global Effort to end Poverty" and TAKING NOTE of its conclusions and recommendations;

EMPHASISING the importance of the Millennium Declaration approved in September 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for the efforts to eradicate poverty worldwide and achieve sustainable development based on respect for human rights;

UNDERLINING that during next year's Millennium Declaration review meeting, sexual and reproductive health and rights for all and the Cairo Programme of Action should be placed centrally vis-a-vis the implementation of the MDGs,

THE COUNCIL:

1. REITERATES its full and broad support for the entire agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the key actions adopted at ICPD+5, as well as the need to achieve its mutually supportive goals;

2. REAFFIRMS the agreement reached to shift towards a rights based approach, which puts the well being and free choice of the individual at the centre of its concern, and the need for a strong EU leadership in the prompt implementation of the ICPD Program of action in the context of the Millennium Declaration, approved in September 2000;

3. REAFFIRMS also that implementation of the ICPD Program of Action is key to poverty reduction and is fundamental to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
The MDGs provide a shared and common vision of a world in 2015, where extreme poverty and hunger are cut in half (MDG 1), child and maternal mortality (MDG 4 and 5) will be greatly reduced and gender disparities in primary and secondary education are eliminated (MDG 2), women are more empowered (MDG 3) and HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases are effectively tackled (MDG 6), and environmental sustainability is ensured (MDG 7) within a global partnership for development (MDG 8);

4. AGREES that the EU action to support the ICPD agenda should be pursued both at global and country level. In particular, progress at country level will be achieved through the inclusion of the ICPD agenda into MDGs-friendly Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and other national planning frameworks. This would help to make the financial resources needed more visible in the national financial instruments such as the Medium-Term Expenditures Frameworks (MTEF). Action at country level will also need to focus on efficient and well trained human resources which are key to the delivery of sexual and reproductive health care and services. EU action at global level will be carried out in close collaboration with inter-parliamentarian groups, multilateral institutions (UNFPA and other UN agencies) and organizations, as well as NGOs and civil society at large;

5. AGREES that financial contributions to the implementation of the Cairo Program of Action have remained far below the level of commitments made in 1994; in particular, donors have provided only fifty percent of the funding they had pledged at the Cairo Conference and REAFFIRMS its commitment to provide the EU's share of the resources estimated to be required to implement the ICPD Programme of Action;

6. RECOGNIZES that additional resources are needed to enable a prompt implementation of the ICPD agenda by focusing in particular on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and encourages EC and Member States to provide financing through geographical and thematic instruments, multi sector support and/or budget support and through additional resources from the UN and other international development agencies;

7. INVITES in this context the EC and the Member States to provide additional resources through the UNFPA to fiil the reproductive health commodities gap, as a short term measure to respond to urgent needs of commodities. The Council recognizes, however, that partner countries have to identify with the support of UNFPA and other international organisations long-term and viable solutions to guarantee the required level of supplies at country level. To this effect, partner countries should develop appropriate road-maps , as well as public private partnerships to secure reproductive health supplies;

8. TAKES NOTE that complications during pregnancy and childbirth are still the leading cause of death for women in the reproductive age in developing countries and that mortality during childbirth has not decreased over the last decade in the poorest countries. The Council, therefore, ACKNOWLEDGES that the lack of safe motherhood is still one of the world's urgent concerns, which needs to be addressed. Reducing maternal mortality implies saving lives, alleviating poverty and improving opportunities for the next generation;

9. EMPHASISES the urgent need to link the fight against HIV/AIDS with support for reproductive and sexual health and rights, in particular to ensure strong political commitment and funding for sexual and reproductive health information, services and research , extend treatment and care, and ensure reproductive choices to people affected by HIV, in accordance with the ICPD Plan of Action;

10. RECOGNIZES that the largest generation of adolescents ever in history is now entering sexual and reproductive life and that their access to sexual and reproductive health information, education, services and commodities, including condoms, is essential in achieving the goals set in Cairo 10 years ago, as well as the fight against HIV/AIDS;

11. UNDERLINES and RECOGNIZES the need for the EU to support the developing countries in the implementation of the ICPD-Program of Action, in close collaboration and coordination with UNFPA and other development partners. The Council notes also that EU Member States and European Commission should work more effectively and coherently with developing countries' governments, UN agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and NGOs, and should align themselves with co-ordinating mechanisms such as the OECD DAC initiative on harmonisation, and the UNAIDS "Three Ones" Initiative. In the spirit of the Cairo consensus, a constructive dialogue including with political, cultural and religious groups and individuals in societies must be part and parcel of these efforts;

12. STRESSES that sexual and reproductive health and rights in relation to women's rights and empowerment merits focused attention, particularly related to gender equality and male involvement in programs;

13. AGREES that sexual and reproductive health and rights and women's rights and empowerment deserve special attention in humanitarian programs, in crisis management and in political dialogues with third parties in conflict and post-conflict situations;

14. UNDERLINES that the EU should continue its strong support to the UNFPA as having the leading role regarding the ICPD agenda. This refers also to the need to provide adequate and predictable resources for the activities of UNFPA. The EU would invite non-EU states to do likewise;

15. RECOGNIZES that the MDGs cannot be attained without progress in achieving the Cairo goal of universal sexual and reproductive health and rights. The EU will therefore work to ensure that sexual and reproductive

health and rights issues are properly reflected within the outcome of the 2005 High Level Event, including its targets and monitoring indicators;

16. The Council URGES the Commission to report on the efforts made by Member States and the Commission in the EU synthesis report for the 2005 MDGs stocktaking exercise.